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United States Department of Agriculture,

U.S. BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY,

200 Office of Grain Investigations,
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3 MILO

(A form of Andropogon sorghum.)

Milo is an important grain crop in the southern half of the Plains region, especially in the western parts of Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas and in eastern New Mexico and Colorado. It is one of the most drought resistant of all the sorghum varieties. This seed represents an early, low, and uniform strain, bearing most of its heads erect instead of pendent ("goose-necked"), as in ordinary milo. It has been developed through selection at our experimental farm, Amarillo, Tex. (elevation 3,600 feet; rainfall 22 inches), where it grows 4½ feet high, matures in about one hundred days, and yields from 30 to 40 bushels to the acre.

Planting.—Milo should be planted after the ground is well warmed and danger from late frost is past. The date may thus vary, with differences in latitude and elevation, from March in southern Texas to early June in South Dakota. In common practice milo is planted immediately after corn, where that crop is grown. It may be listed or surface planted, as local conditions require. Sowing is commonly done with the corn planter, using special plates. The rows should be 36 to 42 inches or more apart. From experiments to date our best grain yields have been secured where the plants were one in a place and about 8 inches apart in the row. This requires about 3 pounds of good seed to the acre.

Cultivation.—For milo, cultivation should be much as for corn. One or more harrowings while the plants are small, and at least two good cultivations at later dates are required. An additional cultivation will usually be repaid.

Harvesting.—Milo is a grain crop and should be cut when the heads are thoroughly mature. Most commonly the crop is cut with the corn binder and cured in the shock. The grain binder may also be used. In small areas the heads are often cut by hand. This strain has been selected for erect heads, so that it may be harvested by some form of header. The grain header is being used more and more in harvesting milo and especially dwarf milo. If the milo crop is tall enough the kafir header may be used. This heads one row at a time. A more suitable form of row header is much needed.

Thrashing.—The ordinary grain separator is used for thrashing. To prevent cracking much of the seed, the concaves may be replaced by boards or part of the concave and cylinder teeth may be removed. The speed of the cylinder should also be reduced to about 600 revolutions a minute. If the grain is to be used for feeding stock, it is not injured by cracking, but cracked seed is worthless for planting. The heads may be removed from milo in the bundle by cutting with a hatchet or broadax, or with a heavy knife blade hinged at the point, with a stout handle attached to the other end, such as can be made from an old planter runner or similar material. The bundles may also be loaded on a rack, in about two layers, heads out, and the heads cut off with a hay knife. Sometimes the bundles are simply held in the cylinder until the seed is thrashed out, and then thrown to one side. It is not usually profitable to thrash the whole bundle, though this is frequently done, especially where labor is scarce.

Feeding.—Milo grain is nearly equal to corn in feeding value. It may be fed as thrashed grain or in bundles to all classes of stock. The thrashed grain can be most profitably fed in the form of chops. Milo has a beneficial laxative effect, thus differing from kafir.

Seed selection.—Each grower should select his own seed with care. Improved strains like this are not yet to be had on the market. Selection should be made in the field before the whole crop is ripe. Early, low, and uniform stalks, bearing erect heads should be chosen. Do not select large heads unless the stand is good. Select from the stalk that produces the largest possible head with the smallest row space. Never select heads from suckers, and in general avoid stalks which produce suckers.

Suggestions.—Your cooperative test is of great value not only to us but to you and to your part of the State. Give your plat no less and no more than good field care, but keep accurate records of dates and yields. When the experiment has been completed by the thrashing and weighing of the grain, send in your report, with 2 or 3 pounds of the seed. We reserve the right to call for as much seed as we furnish you. This improved strain should be carefully compared for earliness, evenness of height and ripening, and for yield with the ordinary milo grown in your neighborhood. For fuller information, see Farmers' Bulletin No. 322, entitled "Milo as a Dry-Land Grain Crop."



